

Rep. Darrell Issa

In Honor of the 30th Anniversary of the Federal Acquisition Regulation

- Today, April 1st, marks the 30th anniversary of the effective date of the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR). The FAR replaced the Armed Services Procurement Regulation and the Federal Procurement Regulations. The principles of the FAR system have remained constant, providing a consistent government-wide approach to the rules and processes of contracting with the U.S. Government. The FAR has helped facilitate our ability to tap into the vast resources of the private sector in those instances when the work of the government can best be performed by outside entities.
- The United States Federal government is one of the world's largest consumers of goods and services, with total procurement spending of approximately a half trillion dollars each year. We need to ensure that the government acquires goods and services in an efficient and streamlined fashion, while getting the best value for the American taxpayer.
- Many have criticized the fashion in which the government acquires goods and services, particularly information technology, as cumbersome and inefficient. The FAR has evolved to provide broad flexibility to the government, while balancing the need to conduct business with integrity, fairness, and openness. Under the FAR, small businesses have grown into a critical business partner for the Federal government.
- The FAR is the Federal regulation that most reflects a collaborative process. Unlike other Federal regulations, the FAR is not signed by one agency, but by three agencies -- the General Services Administration, the Department of Defense, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration -- under the overall direction of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (in the Office of Management and Budget). They are supported by seventeen other civilian agencies and the small agency council. Together they continuously improve Federal acquisition, incorporating best practices from private industry while protecting taxpayer dollars from waste and abuse.

- The FAR has its own authority for rulemaking which streamlines the process but provides the opportunity for participation in the rulemaking process by both government users and the public. There have been notable collaborative rulemakings in the past, such as the implementation of the Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act of 1994, and I support the continued use of the FAR rulemaking process to provide robust exchanges between government and the public.
- From the shortest FAR clause which reads “United States law will apply to resolve any claim of breach of this contract” to the longest one, the Government Property clause, which is over 5000 words long, the FAR is a flexible instrument designed to do the job.
- More than 30 percent of the government’s discretionary budget is dedicated to procurement -- the grunt work of the government. It may not be glamorous, but it is what makes the government work. We acknowledge and support the FAR on its anniversary, but remain committed to streamlining and improving its operation and ensuring that acquisition professionals across the government have the tools, training, and support they need to properly use this critical tool.
- While the FAR is by no means a perfect document, most countries in the world, whether developed or developing, study the FAR and borrow from it for their procurement system. More importantly, the hard working men and women of the acquisition workforce play a vital role in the policy that is developed for the FAR, and in making that policy work on a daily basis they strive to ensure that the taxpayers, in the end, get best value.
- On behalf of those taxpayers, I direct my thanks to the acquisition workforce community for all you do to make our federal acquisition system work. Our system, while not perfect, is better than any alternative out there and something for you to be proud of -- you make it work.